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Catching the Soviet Football on Film

Photographs of Leonid Brezhnev's funeral have yielded at least one small intelligence dividend. In many of the photos, an unidentified man carrying a small satchel can be seen hovering near Yuri Andropov. U.S. analysts have surmised that he is carrying the communications equipment and codes that would allow the Soviet leader to order a nuclear strike. A U.S. military aide performs a similar function; his briefcase is known as "the football." U.S. intelligence officials have long assumed that the Soviets used a comparable system, but until now they had never actually seen the Kremlin's football.